

**Cherie R. Boeneman
286 E. Thirteen Mile, #101
Madison Heights, MI 48071
June 25, 2012**

**The Hon. Geoff Davis
The Hon. Pat Tibiri
Subcommittee on Human Resources
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives**

**Re: Hearing on How Welfare and Tax Benefits Can
Discourage Work**

Dear Sirs:

I am a 55 year old woman from Madison Heights, Michigan. I have, until three and ½ years ago, worked my entire adult life. I was laid off from a major drug store chain where I had been an assistant store manager. The company took the older, salaried assistants, put us on midnights and then discontinued the entire shift for all but a handful of stores in the state. After we were gone, they reestablished midnight shifts with hourly assistants. I had worked there for almost 6 years.

Since then, I have lost my health insurance and unemployment benefits, while helpful, ran out a year and a half ago. I have no income, no assets or bank account. I live with my 78 year old mother who has to keep working part time just to keep a roof over our heads. This, in spite of the fact that she is in the midst of her second round of

chemotherapy for Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. Our condo, which we purchased for \$70,000 in 2005 is now worth about \$15,500 (which is what the last identical unit sold for).

I have never quit seeking work, except for those times when my mother needed me to take her to the doctor and hospital appointments. I have sent out hundreds upon hundreds of resumes, filled out on-line and on premises applications and have had some interviews but no employment. I have made use of MI Works Program for those over 55 years of age. While the resume makeover has been quite helpful, it has not been enough to get me work. I try to remain hopeful but it is increasingly a struggle. Creditors pursue me at every opportunity and I have every desire to pay my bills, I simply have no way to do so. I struggle with despair and depression every day. There seems to be no hope. Sometimes, I just want to end it because there seems to be no place for me in the world anymore.

Added to my struggle is the fact that I have Asperger's Syndrome. The social deficits alone make keeping a job quite difficult. Nevertheless, until recently, I have managed to deal with these issues. Many people with Asperger's are chronically underemployed or unemployed, in spite of being bright and talented individuals. I happen to have a Master's degree but that has not changed my situation at all.

So now, finally, in sheer desperation, I turn to SSI. It is truly my last hope. And I am ashamed because I had to file. I would really, truly rather have a job. Please do not say that Welfare and tax breaks are disincentives to work. They are LIFELINES for people who want the dignity of work.

Are corporate welfare and tax breaks for the wealthy disincentives for THEM to work? You say they are job creators. Then I guess the answer would be, "No." I worked my entire life, I paid into Social Security, Medicare and Unemployment. They are not entitlements. They ARE lifelines. Please stop trying to destroy what is left for the poor, elderly and disadvantaged. If you don't the country you will have left will no longer be America the Beautiful.

Sincerely,

Cherie R. Boeneman

cc. The Honorable Sander M. Levin